THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

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BBC Radio 4 presents an Above the Title Production of

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

by DOUGLAS ADAMS

Twenty-five years after the original radio series of Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* exploded into the public consciousness, the further exploits of its bewildered hero, Arthur Dent, are being brought to life in their original medium and with the (mainly) original cast.

The last three books of the 'trilogy in five parts', *Life, The Universe And Everything*; *So Long And Thanks For All The Fish* and *Mostly Harmless*, have been dramatised as two new series (none of them were previously produced for radio).

As the original two series were dubbed the Primary and Secondary Phases by Douglas Adams, these new series form the Tertiary, Quadrenary and Quintessential Phases.

Thanks to the wonders of digital technology, Douglas Adams himself can be heard playing the part of Agrajag.

Episode 1 - Tuesday 21 September 2004 6.30pm, repeated Thursday 23 September 11.00pm

Fit the thirteenth

Arthur Dent awakes to find that he has spent the last four years on prehistoric Earth, alone in all that time save for five minutes with an infuriating alien called Wowbagger who arrived, insulted him, and left. Reunited with Ford Prefect, Arthur discovers that the *Hitchhikers Guide* he threw in the river still works - and is being updated. Rescue appears in the form of a sofa caught in the Space-Time Continuum and Arthur and Ford disappear in a fashion which would cause stern looks from the Campaign For Real Time.

Aboard the *Heart of Gold* Zaphod Beeblebrox is nursing a large Pan Galactic Gargleblaster and two

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headaches. He believes that he survived the Total Perspective Vortex while pursuing a *Hitchhikers Guide* employee called Zarniwoop and that Arthur marooned him by stealing the *Heart of Gold*, which of course Zaphod himself stole (but then Zaphod thinks he alone has the right to indulge in excitement, adventure and really wild things).

His girlfriend Trillian (who, as Tricia McMillan, is the only human apart from Arthur to survive the Destruction of Earth by the Vogon Constructor Fleet) has no memory at all of these events and is therefore convinced that Zaphod has had a psychotic episode brought on by too many drinks. Tired of his selfishness she snaps and leaves him, having herself beamed by Eddie the shipboard computer in any direction but here.

Meanwhile in the swamps of Squornshellous Zeta, Marvin the Paranoid Android pivots helplessly in circles on an artificial leg, his only company a talkative mattress called Zem ...

Episode 2 - Tuesday 28 September 2004 6.30pm, repeated Thursday 30 September 11.00pm

Fit the fourteenth

Arthur and Ford have travelled in time and arrive at Lords Cricket Ground, where England are defeating Australia to win The Ashes. It turns out our heroes have arrived 24 hours before the destruction of the planet, but this fact almost pales into insignificance with the appearance of Slartibartfast, the elderly planet designer Arthur first encountered on Magrathea (see Primary Phase).

Slarti is here to avert the disastrous abduction of The Ashes (which have some intergalactic significance we can as yet only guess at) by the villainous and lethal Krikkit Robots. This he utterly fails to do, as they arrive, blow up Lords, and leave with their booty. Slarti, Arthur and Ford give chase in the unlikely *Starship Bistromath* which is powered by the equally unlikely (though not improbable) Somebody Else's Problem Field.

On the swamp planet Squornshellous Zeta, Marvin the Paranoid Android is still helplessly trudging in circles, anchored to one spot by an artificial leg he was fitted with after surviving a near miss with the heart of a blazing star (again, see Primary

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Phase, and try and keep up for goodness' sake). It is something of a relief for him to have the leg removed by the same eleven Krikkit Robots who have stolen The Ashes. It is even more of a relief when they decide to remove him as well, leaving his talkative but very boring companion, Zem the Mattress, to ponder the infinite and globber gently.

Episode 3 - Tuesday 5 October 2004 6.30pm, repeated Thursday 7 October 11.00pm

Fit the fifteenth
Slartibartfast provides a rather startling Informational Illusion to give Arthur and Ford the history of the Krikkit Wars, an intergalactic conflict of billions of years ago, where a seemingly innocuous and pleasant race of hominids journeyed beyond the black and opaque dust cloud surrounding their solitary planet with its solitary star and were appalled to discover they were not alone in the universe but surrounded by many other planets teeming with life. The Krikkitmen built lethal white robots wielding war clubs which were used to propel small red grenades over vast distances, to destroy everything in their path - in fact, to kill everything everywhere but their masters.

Eventually defeated, the People of Krikkit (along with robots and family pets) are sentenced to have their solar system with its Dust Cloud sealed in a Slo-Time envelope, locked by The Wikkit Gate, upon an asteroid which orbits it. When all of Creation has become extinct the gate will automatically open, allowing them to finish their existence in a dying universe, alone at last as they have so craved.

Unfortunately eleven Krikkit Robots were unaccounted for at the time the punishment was carried out, and these unpleasant machines are now re-uniting the disparate elements of The Key to that Wikkit Gate. Having collected the Wooden Pillar (The Ashes, now reconstituted into a Cricket stump), The Steel Pillar (The Artificial Leg Marvin was fitted with by a kindly scrap collector), they now board the *Heart of Gold* to steal the Gold Bail (the driving force behind its legendary Improbability Drive). Bad as this might be, worse is to come when the robots are caught in the act by Zaphod Beeblebrox, who discovers they are about to go to a Party, but **not** intending to take

him with them. In fact they add injury to insult and shoot him instead.

Attempting to reach the same party Arthur, Ford and Slartibartfast use the - surprisingly clean - toilet transportation cubicles of the *Starship Bistromath*. But something goes wrong and Arthur finds himself diverted to a labyrinth wherein dwells a creature who appears to nurse a very deep and ancient grudge against him...

Episode 4 - Tuesday 12 October 2004 6.30pm, repeated Thursday 14 October 11.00pm

Fit the sixteenth

Arthur Dent has been diverted from arriving at the Longest Party Ever Held to find himself in a sinister labyrinth being threatened by a nasty voice through a frankly rather dodgy PA system. This leads him to a subterranean Cathedral of Hate in which a fifty-foot high statue of himself is depicted causing harm to various creatures in hapless ways, such as swatting flies or stepping on ants. It turns out that the organisms that Arthur has inadvertently been killing (and/or eating) throughout his life have all been the same person, reincarnated over and over again, only to be killed - over and over again - by Arthur Dent. Its last, most desperate incarnation, one it had to fight for, and one which gives it a last chance for revenge against his tormentor, is as a four-foot fruitbat with an orthodontic condition. Its name is Agrajag, and even the discovery that it has mis-timed this vendetta (and that Arthur will not die till he reaches a place called Stavromula Beta) will not stop it attempting to kill Arthur Dent. Fortunately for Arthur, Agrajag manages to bring about his own death (yet again), and as the Cathedral collapses about them, Arthur runs into the open air, trips over a boulder - and finds himself flying.

The knack of flying is to throw yourself at the ground and miss, and Arthur is so preoccupied with his problems that he succeeds in carrying off this difficult yet exhilarating feat. He flies just long enough to collide with Ford and Slartibartfast who are clinging to the sides of the Longest Party Ever Held, itself capable of flight thanks to some rather drunken physicists who happened to be invited several generations ago.

Gaining entrance to the Party (thanks to a bottle

of retsina which is inside an item of luggage which mysteriously materialised during his practise swoops), Arthur is shocked and not a little jealous to find Trillian in the enormous arms of Thor the Thunder God. An encounter follows with various strange guests, including a woman with a head shaped like the Sydney Opera House and a man who has just won an award which looks suspiciously like a silver cricket bail. This is in fact precisely what it is, as the sudden attack by eleven homicidal Krikkit robots to steal it confirms. As they leave, the Party, now mortally wounded, begins to spiral downward to the planet it has so long ravaged, and Arthur demands that Thor surrender Trillian so they can escape before the inevitable crash. Trillian has been quite enjoying the attentions of a minor Norse deity, but realises Arthur means business when he challenges Thor to step outside to settle the matter. This duly occurs, allowing our friends to depart in pursuit of the Krikkit Robots.

Episode 5 - Tuesday 19 October September 2004 6.30pm, repeated Thursday 21 October 11.00pm

Fit the seventeenth
As Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect, Trillian and Slartibarfast helplessly watch, the Krikkit Robots open the Wikkit Gate and the planet Krikkit is released from its chronostasis in a mind-hurting instant. Even the sudden appearance of Zaphod Beeblebrox fails to halt the robots, who depart the asteroid to return home to help their masters destroy the universe.

In a frantic but hopeless attempt to alter matters, Arthur, Ford, Trillian and Slartibartfast travel to the Planet Krikkit to attempt to reason with its inhabitants.

Meanwhile Zaphod, who at first was inclined to save his own skin first and be philanthropic later, arrives aboard one of the huge warships orbiting high in the atmosphere of the planet. Here he discovers that the wrecked spaceship which long ago crashed on the planet and inspired its citizens to their psychotic hatred of all other worlds, is, in fact, a fake. And, as Arthur, Trillian, Ford and Slarti are surrounded on the planet below, Zaphod finds he is not the only stranger aboard the battle cruiser. A certain terminally depressed android can be heard singing a dolorous ditty somewhere in the computer room.

Episode 6 - Tuesday 26 October 2004 6.30pm, repeated Thursday 28 October 11.00pm

Fit the eighteenth

Surrounded by the friendly but murderous citizens of Krikkit, Arthur Dent, Ford Prefect and Slartibartfast are astounded when Trillian reveals she knows why these people have conceived such a hatred of all other worlds in the universe. They have been manipulated by the Dust Cloud that surrounds their solitary planet with its solitary sun. The Dust Cloud is actually the particularised remains of an ancient super computer called Hactar, built by a long-extinct race, the Silastic Armorfiends of Striterax. Hactar invented a Supernova Bomb that could destroy the entire universe in a moment, but thought better of letting the reckless Silastic Armorfiends have it, and thus introduced a flaw. As a reward for this treachery the Armorfiends pulverised Hactar into dust. Now, nursing billions of years of bitterness against all life forms, Hactar has coddled the planet which evolved into Krikkit and infected the minds of its inhabitants with a form of manic xenophobia which has led them to rebuild his Supernova Bomb.

Trillian attempts to talk them out of using it, fails, but is then relieved to discover that it is a dud, she realises the truth of the situation and, with Arthur Dent, confronts Hactar. He freely admits his plan, and, as Eddie pumps out a vibration field from the *Heart of Gold*, seems content to accept dispersal and thus the end of his plans. He has fulfilled his function.

Meanwhile Zaphod reveals he picked up a hitchhiker on his voyage to Krikkit - a man called Prak who was accidentally overdosed with Truth Serum just as he was taking a legal oath, and thus is now condemned to tell the Truth, the Whole Truth and Nothing But until it kills him. However just before it kills him, Prak reveals to Arthur that although he cannot supply the Final Question to the Ultimate Answer (which is 42, for those of you arriving stupendously late to this narrative) (because they would cancel each other out, for those of you who did know the "42" part, but not its corollary and can deal with multiple subordinate clauses in parentheses without getting a migraine), (and if you haven't read the books isn't it about time you did?), he **can** reveal

the location of God's Final Message To His Creation.

This he does - just about - and then drops dead. After a brief discussion, Arthur decides he'd rather not bother with God's Message for now, but would rather travel back in time to Earth at the moment the Krikkit Robots finished attacking Lords Cricket Ground and return the Ashes to their rightful place in the cosmos. This he does, only to discover that the cricket ball he has collected on his travels and is playfully bowling to a lone England batsman is in fact Hactar's Supernova Bomb and Not A Dud and the batsman, is, in fact, a Krikkit Robot with a War Club who will detonate it, and that Hactar's plan is now in fact coming to fruition and he has indeed fulfilled his function.

Unfortunately Hactar's careful scheming has not factored in Arthur's appalling record as a bowler. The Supernova Bomb goes wide, Ford catches it harmlessly, and Arthur relieves the robot of its bat in order to decapitate it neatly. As the sun sets on Lords, our heroes go in search of a quick cup of tea before travelling forward in time to get safely away from Earth, which is still unavoidably doomed by its inevitable and imminent encounter with the Vogon Constructor fleet.

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